

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1-17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously presented) A method for stabilizing an intervertebral joint between adjacent first and second vertebral bodies of a patient from a posterior approach using an instrument guide, the instrument guide including a tube having a longitudinal axis passing through a lumen of said tube at least partially surrounded by a wall having a distal edge, said distal edge having a non-zero angle relative to a reference line perpendicular to said longitudinal axis, the method comprising:

- forming an implant bore between said adjacent first and second vertebral bodies by passing a drill through the instrument guide;
- inserting an intervertebral implant having a longitudinal axis into said implant bore, wherein the longitudinal axis of the implant is at an angle of about 10° to about 45° from a sagittal plane of the patient; and
- mounting external stabilization to said first and second vertebral bodies.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 18 wherein said tube further includes at least one paddle extending from said distal edge of said wall.

20-27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently amended) The method of claim 19, wherein ~~An instrument guide for guiding surgical instruments, the instrument guide comprising:~~

~~a tube having a longitudinal axis passing through a lumen of said tube, said lumen at least partially surrounded by a wall, said wall having a proximal end and a distal end;  
said distal end of said wall having distal edge, said distal edge having an angle of about 10° to about 45° relative to a reference line perpendicular to said longitudinal axis and is adapted to rest against, and in substantial contact with, a posterior surface of a human vertebra; and  
at least one paddle extending from said distal edge of said wall.~~

29. (Canceled)
30. (Currently amended) The method instrument guide according to claim 28, wherein the tube comprises a first and a second diametrically opposed paddles.
31. (Currently amended) The method instrument guide according to claim 28~~19~~, wherein each of said at least one paddles include a tapered distal end.
32. (Currently amended) The method instrument guide according to claim 28~~19~~, wherein said lumen is sized to receive a distraction plug.
33. (Currently amended) The ~~instrument guide method~~ method according to claim 28, wherein said distal edge has an angle of about 22° relative to a reference line perpendicular to said longitudinal axis.
34. (Currently amended) ~~The instrument guide according to claim 28~~ An instrument guide for guiding surgical instruments, the instrument guide comprising:

a tube having a longitudinal axis passing through a lumen of said tube, said lumen at least partially surrounded by a wall, said wall having a proximal end and a distal end;

said distal end of said wall having distal edge, said distal edge having an angle of about 10° to about 45° relative to a reference line perpendicular to said longitudinal axis and is adapted to rest against, and in substantial contact with, a posterior surface of a human vertebra;

at least one paddle extending from said distal edge of said wall; and having a proximal end including an adjustable stop operatively connected to the tube to affirmatively stop distal advancement of instruments passed through said instrument guide.

35. (Canceled)

36. (Currently amended) An instrument guide for guiding surgical instruments, the instrument guide comprising:

a tube having a longitudinal axis passing through a lumen of said tube, said lumen sized to receive a distraction plug and at least partially surrounded by a wall, said wall having a proximal end and a distal end;

said distal end of said wall having a distal edge, said distal edge having an angle of about 22° relative to a reference line perpendicular to said longitudinal axis and adapted to rest against, and in substantial contact with, a posterior surface of a human vertebra;

an adjustable stop operatively connected to the tube to affirmatively stop instruments passed through said instrument guide; and

a first and a second paddle extending from said distal edge of said wall, said first and second paddles being diametrically opposed.

37. (Currently amended) A kit for preparing an implant site for receiving an implant between adjacent first and second vertebrae, the kit comprising:  
an instrument guide, said instrument guide comprising:
- (i) a tube having a longitudinal axis passing through a lumen of said tube, said lumen at least partially surrounded by a wall, said wall having a proximal end and a distal end;
  - (ii) said distal end of said wall having a distal edge, said distal edge having an angle of about 10° to about 45° relative to a reference line perpendicular to said longitudinal axis and adapted to rest against, and in substantial contact with, a posterior surface of a human vertebra;
  - (ii) an adjustable stop operatively connected to the tube to affirmatively stop instruments passed through said instrument guide; and
  - (iii) at least one paddle extending from said distal edge of said wall; and  
a distractor.
38. (Previously presented) The kit according to claim 37 wherein said distal edge of said instrument guide has an angle of about 22° relative to a reference line perpendicular to said longitudinal axis.
39. (Original) The kit according to claim 37 wherein said distractor is a distracting plug.
40. (Original) The kit according to claims 37 wherein said distractor is a wedge distractor.
41. (Original) The kit according to claim 37 further comprising a boring tool.
42. (Original) The kit according to claim 37 further comprising an external vertebral stabilization device.

43. (Original) The kit according to claim 42 wherein the external vertebral stabilization device comprises two or more pedicle screws and at least one rod.

44-77 (Cancelled)